

A TRIP FROM DARLINGTON ON SUGAR CREEK TO NEW ORLEANS--1843

Community Affairs File

Vigo County Public Library

There are many who have canoed and floated Sugar Creek from Crawfordsville, down stream to Deere's Mill and on through Shades State Park, Turkey Run State Park, and even on to the Wabash. The annual Sugar Creek Canoe Race starts at Crawfordsville and ends at Shades State Park. The couples race, last year, started at Darlington near the covered bridge and ended in Crawfordsville. No one can deny that Sugar Creek is one of Indiana's most beautiful and scenic streams. It is also a challenging stream to canoeists. It is doubtful, however, if very many ever negotiated Sugar Creek in a fully loaded flat boat with a length of FIFTY FEET and a width of SIXTEEN FEET. The following interesting account as told by W. H. B. Endicott, one who made the trip, was published in June 19, 1908 issue of the Crawfordsville Journal. Sugar Creek, at that time was more commonly known as Rock River. There would be no mystery about this name for anyone who has been on Sugar Creek in low water. The remains of the mill spoken of in the account are just across the stream from where the mixed couples division of the Annual Sugar Creek canoe race began in 1968.

In telling the story of this trip Mr. Endicott says: "It was in the spring of 1843 that Silas Kenworthy, James Mullen, and myself undertook to take a boat load of flour, bacon, and lard to New Orleans, Louisiana, from the Kenworthy Mill which was just below Darlington. We had an oversupply of flour and had to take the long hard trip to get rid of it. We left the mill on April 27, 1843 and arrived back home on July 10. The route of our trip was down Rock River or Sugar Creek to the Wabash River, down the Wabash to the Ohio, and from the Ohio to the Mississippi, making the last big jaunt to New Orleans on the FATHER OF WATERS".

The boat in which we made the trip during the early spring months, was about fifty feet long and sixteen feet wide and was flat bottomed. The gunwales of the boat were thirty inches deep. They were hewed out of tree trunks. There were two floors in the boat and all cargo was placed on the upper or false floor. When any water leaked into the boat, it was below and we pumped it out. In this manner, no damage was done to the cargo. The boat was propelled by two sweeps and a stern."

"We started from the old Kenworthy mill on the morning of April 23, 1843. For days before it had rained and the creek was greatly swollen and was out of its banks. We had been waiting for high waters and now our time had come. The inhabitants for miles around had come to see us off and wish us good luck on our long and novel trip."

"Trouble began at the very start. A number of people got aboard the boat to take a ride for the first few miles and they made the weight so great that we could not manage the boat. The boat floated down the stream and became lodged between the bank and a sapling. It was necessary to cut down the tree below the water level to free the boat. That was a hard job. Our next mishap was at Clark's Dam. Near the bank was a stump and the outside gunwale caught on it causing the boat to go over sideways and it dipped until it took some water. We landed and pumped out the water."

An original journal of a River boat Trip.

CANOEING

"In crossing the Elston Dam now known as Matin's Dam, we broke off one of the sweeps. Kenworthy attempted to tie the scow to a tree and in some manner became entangled in the rope. I was on board and seeing his predicament, swam ashore and untied the rope. The rope was around his waist, and as the boat was floating away, it was drawing tighter every minute. After I untied the rope, and untangled Kenworthy, the boat floated away with both of us ashore. We rushed across the field as fast as we could and caught the boat near the foot of Washington Street. (Main Street of Crawfordsville where it meets the creek at the present power plant). The anchor rope was thrown to us and we tied up the boat and made the needed repairs."

"During the trip we went over eleven dams. The highest one that we crossed was at the narrows of Sugar Creek and was about twelve or fifteen feet high. (This is just a few yards upstream from the still existing narrows covered bridge at the east edge of Turkey Run State Park.) It was built diagonally across the stream and the mill located there stood out of the water. This caused us to have to go over crosswise and the current below made the boat take water. These were the good old days, when there was a grist mill about every 2 miles on Rock River where farmers had their corn and wheat ground."

"We reached the junction of Sugar Creek and the Wabash River above Montezuma without further trouble. Because of the backwater of the Wabash, however, we were compelled to wait until it went down before entering it."

"At Little Prairie Landing, our cargo was sold out to a company who made a business to buy boats and their cargoes that were brought down from the river. The company lashed another boat, seventy five feet in length, to ours and then lashed 900 bushels of corn into it. When we sold out to the company, we were required to take the cargo on to New Orleans in order to get our money. The company added five men to our crew, making eight in all. We made our way down the Wabash and entered the Ohio below the town of New Harmony. We then joined the Mississippi at Cairo, Illinois, and made our last dash for our goal."

"One night we landed at Vicksburg, Tennessee, and when we started to resume our voyage the next day, we found that the boat had sprung a leak. The boats were separated, and the corn was piled up on one side. We made the needed repairs and went on to New Orleans without any further trouble about leaking."

"After our selling out to the company, they placed a captain in charge. He was a gruff sort of chap and did not get along well with the crew. Near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, several of the crew got drunk and got into trouble with the captain. They chased the captain off the boat, and would not allow him to return. Kenworthy went to New Orleans and reported the trouble to the owners of the boats and one of them came to take charge of the boats and pilot them into New Orleans."

"A few miles this side of New Orleans, I saw a large eddy in the river, and I called the captain's attention to it. He ordered us to pull away from it, but we were too close and consequently, we got into it. As the eddy carried us around and around, several boats passed and the passengers jeeringly asked, "What are the prices paid for flour in New Orleans?"

"We entered New Orleans on a foggy morning and as I was lying on the floor of the boat, I saw the sails of a vessel only a short distance away. I alarmed the crew and after a hard struggle, we succeeded in passing the sailing vessel without striking it. We made port at the upper landing at New Orleans, and with that, our work was done."

"After a weeks stay in the southern city, we boarded the Nathan Hale, a steam ship, and started for home."

"While in the Mississippi, the boat ran into a tree, which smashed the lower deck of the boat. The passengers became quite excited because the boat was taking water. Someone yelled out that she had so much water in her that she'd soon sink, so the captain ordered the boat driven to land. Since the river spread out over lowlands the boat was easily grounded. However, during the mad race to land, the jacket on the boiler blew off and the steam chest broke. After making an inspection, it was found that the floor of the lower deck was smashed, and no damage was done to the hull of the boat. A passenger who had been sleeping on the lower deck was knocked off when the boat struck the tree. Part of the crew went in a skiff after him. He was found some distance down stream, floating on a log. The blacksmith on the boat made the needed repairs and we were ready to start again in two hours."

"The Nathan Hale plowed on up the Mississippi and the Ohio and up to the Wabash. The destination was Lafayette, but because of low water, the boat could not get past the grand chain of the Wabash, near its mouth, so we were forced to run back to Louisville. At Louisville, we boarded another boat and went to Madison and there, took the train to Scipio. The railroad was 31 miles in length and was the first one I ever saw. There were no railroads in the Darlington area in those days. From Scipio we drove by carriage and wagon to Indianapolis, and then to Darlington, arriving there July 10, 1843."

The direct descendants of W. H. B. Endicott and James Mullen still live in and around Darlington. The grandson, Mr. Homer Endicott, and the great granddaughter, Mrs. Edyth Cain recall that the full name of W. H. B. Endicott was William Henry Harrison Buckner Miller McClure Endicott. The old Kenworthy mill was still operational until the late 1940s when it was abandoned. All that now remains is a remnant of the dam which created the mill pond upstream, portions of the mill race, and the crumbling foundation. It is told locally, that the dam was dynamited, supposedly, because it contributed to flooding of farmlands during high water.

An effort was made to preserve the mill and the area around it near the covered bridge at the time the mill fell into disuse. The effort failed because of lack of local interest at the time.

(Written by a member of the Vermillion County Historical Society. He lived in Newport, and became a Chicago newspaperman. Name not remembered by donor of paper - Mrs Henry Gray.)

Wabash 'oardeal' concludes after 100-mile river venture

Wabash River
T's AUG 1 1983

By Donna Christenberry
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

As the 10 canoes and two kayaks came into view of Fairbanks Park Sunday, the paddlers within whooped, yelled and raised their oars in victory.

Wabash River Trek, a 100-mile journey which got under way July 25 in Lafayette and continued along the Wabash to raise funds for the American Lung Association, was complete. More than \$4,000 was collected, according to Debbie Mahin, trip coordinator.

Upon their arrival to the local park, families waved welcome-back signs and blew party horns. Mayor P. Pete Chalos presented certificates to the 34 participants.

"Does anybody have a cold beer?" hollered one participant as the canoe glided toward shore.

Another paddler rolled her kayak sideways into the Wabash for a cooling dip.

The top money-raiser was Bernard Burns of Terre Haute. He collected \$605.50. Another Terre Haute resident, Richard Neice, raised \$225.

Burns said that although he and

Neice have been avid canoeists on Sugar Creek, this trip was the longest either had taken. Neither would soon forget the experience.

The trip was "trying and tiring," Neice said. The group fought headwinds, and storms marred three nights of the excursion — though rains waited until camp was pitched.

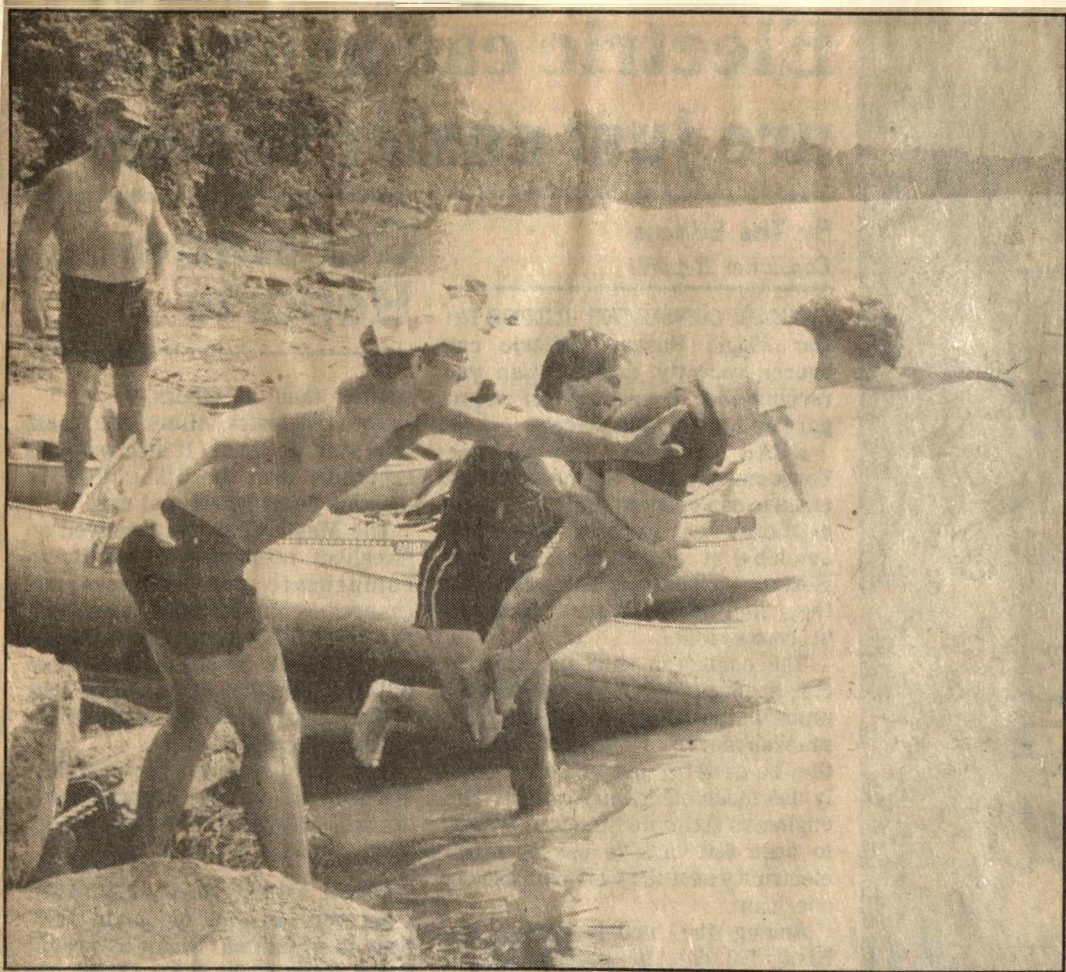
Yet the river people they met along the way were encouraging and supportive. Neice said one fellow who had closed shop for the day, came back and opened so that they could purchase ice.

CANOEING

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Finishing with a splash: Trip coordinator gets dunked by



Derek Wilson and Jim Evans after their 100-mile trip

Mementoes Recall 1888 Canoe Trip Down Tippecanoe and Wabash Rivers

By BARBARA L. BRUGNAUX
Tribune Staff Writer

A yellowing newspaper clipping and 43 faded photographs are all that remain to tell the saga of five young men and their journey down the Tippecanoe and Wabash rivers in 1888.

But the story of how those mementoes survived the intervening 83 years and returned to Terre Haute is as intriguing as the adventure tale itself.

One of the five intrepid members of the Wabash Canoe Club who paddled down the rivers was Charles Monroe Reeves, later to become a distinguished newspaper man and chief publicist for the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.

The photographs and clippings from the Terre Haute Gazette (where Reeves once worked) are from his collection of mementoes.

Reeves died in New York in 1920 and his souvenirs came to the TRIBUNE this week in a round-about manner.

Before his death, Reeves gave charge of a trunkful of memorabilia to Grace Robinson, a New York newspaper reporter who had once worked under his direction on a Nebraska paper.

Most of the collection consisted of scrapbooks connected with Reeves' tremendous job as Chief of Domestic Exploitation at the St. Louis Exposition. The



CANOE AND CAMERA—The tired canoeists as they tied up along the river bank near Terre Haute shortly before they finished their long trip down the Tippecanoe and Wabash rivers to Terre Haute.

School of Journalism at the University of Missouri now has these in their Western Historical Manuscripts Library.

The remainder Miss Robinson

sent to the TRIBUNE. The 43 was also carefully mounted, will photographs, which are be given to the Vigo County Historical Museum.

mounted on gilt-edged card-board and were carefully identified, and the clipping which Lake Maxinkuckee, near Cul-

for Frank B. Miller, Erastus C. Miller, John Cox, John Bardsley and Reeves that 27th day of July, 1888.

The five and their individual canoes were transported from the lake by wagon and hauled to a bridge about one-half mile above Marshland, Ind., where they were launched on July 30.

While it can't be said that the young men explored the rivers since both streams were dotted with towns and cities, the adventure was considered noteworthy enough to rate a story entitled "Canoe and Camera" in the Terre Haute Gazette.

Cox and Frank Miller both had cameras to record every moment of the 300-mile, 12-day river journey from Marshland to Terre Haute.

Fully equipped with tents, rubber coats to ward off rain and yards of netting to stave off mosquitoes, the young adventurers, clad in their natty white outfits, paddled off.

In many ways, the traveling wasn't so difficult. The towns and cities provided ample supply stops and when inclement weather made cooking impossible there was usually a good restaurant within walking distance.

Neither the Tippecanoe nor the Wabash were considered navigable rivers, however, and numerous dams and rapids had to be crossed by the canoeists. The canoes were carried overland around the five dams but the young men decided to shoot the 70-1 some rapids.

In one day alone, 23 sets of rapids were crossed with what was described by the Gazette as "rapid descent over boulders (sic) and seething water."

Critiques of the two rivers by the canoeists showed them to be opposites with the Tippecanoe the most popular.

The Tippecanoe is described as "an everchanging panorama

of beautiful landscapes..." with "low, green banks covered with a thick growth of grass..."

"And never while on that river (the Tippecanoe) did the party see anything resembling mud, which is the predominant feature of the Wabash."

The prettiest feature of the Tippecanoe River, according to the five men, was the clearness of the water where "fine specimens of fish could be seen in tens of dozens." Pike, perch, salmon and bass were seen with "none of this vexatious Wabash mud" to cloud the view.

Differences in the two streams were most evident at their junction where it was noted that "the scene is not a pretty one, the only noticeable feature being the way in which the clear waters of the Tippecanoe intermingle with the muddy Wabash. A photo was taken at the junction and the difference between the rivers can even be noticed in the photo."

Critical of the Wabash River as the five canoeists were, it is likely they would have preferred the muddy Wabash to the polluted Wabash.

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